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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF, INTELLIGENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

TAB A

ACSI CONTRIBUTION TO NIE 63-56: PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS
IN NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM THROUGH MID-1957(C)

I. THE COMMUNIST POSITION IN NORTH AND SOUTH VIETNAM

A. Strength and Weaknesses of the DRV

1. What changes, if any, have taken place since the publication of NIE 63.1-55 with respect to the following:

a. Popular attitudes and the effectiveness of DRV controls in North Vietnam.

The DRV continues generally to be successful in imposing its authority throughout North Vietnam. No significant uprisings have been reported, and active dissidence appears to be manifested only in occasional local disorders which are readily suppressed by the security forces. Discontent with living conditions and resentment of the stern control probably are extensive, but the majority of the population probably leans toward passive acceptance of the situation. In general, the regime appears capable of retaining firm control, and of suppressing such outbreaks of resistance as may occur.

b. The identity and the respective roles and influence of DRV leaders.

There appear to have been no great changes in the DRV leadership. General Giap continues to play a major role in policy formulation, and continues to enjoy wide popularity.

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There have been no significant new developments in DRV relations with other Communist countries.

d. DRV relations with non-Communist countries

(1) Cambodia -- The DRV is continuing to foster Cambodian neutrality, and apparently has made little progress in developing Communist strength within Cambodia.

(2) Laos -- The DRV is continuing to provide covert support to the Pathet Lao regime, while seeking to develop friendly relations with the Royal Government. The DRV may now be willing to accept less extensive Pathet Lao participation in any coalition government than it previously hoped for, relying more on the fostering of neutralism in Laos as a short-term objective.

(3) Vietnam -- The DRV has pressed for the resumption of normal relations between the two zones, while covertly encouraging elements in opposition to the Diem Government. It has lent support to Vietnamese expatriate groups seeking to establish a "government-in-exile" for South Vietnam, while continuing its efforts to weaken the Diem Government through infiltration, subversion, and the support of non-Communist rebel forces. It has carefully refrained, however, from overt action in South Vietnam; DRV paramilitary forces have engaged in combat only in the guise of, or in conjunction with, non-Communist rebel forces.

e. The DRV attitude toward the Geneva agreements, in particular the holding of all-Vietnam elections and the ICC?

The DRV has continued its avowed "strict adherence" to the Geneva Agreements, and has adamantly insisted on their full implementation by the other signatories. It has sought to reconvene the Geneva Conference to discuss the all-Vietnam elections, and has consistently denounced the Diem Government's failure to cooperate in preparations for the elections. The DRV has also denounced the dissolution of the French High Command as representing the liquidation of the entire basis of the

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Geneva Armistice, but it has not threatened, nor indicated that it contemplated, any retaliatory action. Thus it appears that the DRV is intent on utilizing the Geneva Agreements, and the machinery established thereunder, as long as they continue in existence.

2. What is the Economic Situation in North Vietnam?

No contribution.

3. What are the present strengths and capabilities of the military and security forces of the DRV? What significant trends, if any, have been observed in the disposition, training, indoctrination, and development of the armed forces?

a. The "Vietnam People's Army" (VPA) is estimated to total ^{264,000} ~~250,000~~ troops, having increased by less than ten percent during the past year. The Army includes 14 infantry divisions, 2 artillery divisions, 1 AAA groupment, ¹³ ~~12~~ separate infantry regiments, and ⁵ ~~4~~ border and coastal security regiments. Regional and Popular troop strengths are estimated to total 41,000 and 75,000 respectively.

b. VPA units continue to be concentrated largely in the Red River Delta region, with lesser concentrations in the coastal population centers of Thanh Hoa and Vinh. One division each is disposed in support of border and coastal security forces in the vicinity of the 17th parallel, in western Tonkin, and in northeastern Tonkin.

c. The post-Geneva reorganization of the VPA has continued during the past year, although the pace has somewhat slackened. Four new infantry divisions have been identified, but most of their components existed previously as separate units. The Army appears to have reached a peak troop strength, but further refinements and modifications in organization probably will be made. Two or three additional divisions, formed from existing smaller units, may emerge.

d. Emphasis appears to have been given to the development of border and coastal security forces. One border security regiment (stationed along the eastern border of Laos) has been identified as such,

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and two former infantry regiments (one opposite northern Laos and one along the 17th parallel) may have been converted to border security status. Three coastal security regiments, under control of a Central Directorate for Coastal Security, have been formed. These units, which include armed off-shore patrol craft and artillery supported beach observations posts and patrols, are deployed along the entire length of the coast of North Vietnam. Similarly, an air-defense ground observation system has been established to detect overflights of Viet Minh territory by foreign aircraft. The development of these defensive elements has strengthened the security of the DRV regime.

e. The training of VPA units appears in general to have been more intensive in the past year than in 1954-55, probably denoting the release of many units from occupational duties and economic rehabilitation projects. Multi-divisional maneuvers were reported in late 1955, and several divisions reportedly were engaged in independent divisional exercises with artillery support. No details on the types of maneuvers or exercises are available. Command, staff and specialist training is now being conducted in a major training installation at Son Tay, but some Viet Minh personnel continue to be trained in South China. The training of special artillery AAA and armored units in the Cao Bang area apparently is continuing, but precise information is lacking on the types and quantities of equipment available to these units. Fairly reliable reports indicate that the Viet Minh have as many as 100 armored vehicles of all types, which would be sufficient to equip two regiments on the Chinese Communist pattern. With the exception of several tank-recovery vehicles, however, no new types or unprecedented quantities of equipment have been observed in Hanoi.

f. Political indoctrination continues to be intensive, but no new trend is apparent.

g. In summary, the VPA has continued its evolution toward a more modern, effective army. It appears to have reached a peak troop

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strength, but refinements and improvements in organization are continuing. About half of the major units may be considered to be combat-ready, and the remainder probably will reach that status before the end of 1956. The VPA is capable of defeating all military forces now located in South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

B. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Viet Minh in South Vietnam.

1. What are the strengths and capabilities of the Viet Minh political and military forces in South Vietnam? What is the geographical pattern of Viet Minh strength and resources in the South?

a. Viet Minh clandestine military strength in South Vietnam is estimated to total between 5,000 and 10,000 armed personnel. We have fairly reliable evidence that at least 5,000 of these are organized in skeletal company (75-100) and battalion (200-300) sized units, which could be readily expanded through recruitment.

b. These elements generally are distributed in traditional Viet Minh base areas: the mountains and foothills paralleling the Annam coast, and the remote swampy regions of Cochinchina. Principal concentrations are located southwest of Quang Nam (300), southwest in Central Vietnam; northwest of Tay Ninh (500), northeast of Long Xuyen (500) of Quang Ngai (1,000), and northwest of Phan Thiet (500), and in the Ca Mau region (1,000) of South Vietnam. These forces generally are not engaged in active military operations, with the exception of several hundred serving with non-Communist rebel forces. Their activity apparently is confined largely to protection of vital bases, training, escorting important political cadres, and armed propaganda. Some reports have indicated that the Viet Minh are "mobilizing" their forces in the south, forming new units, and recovering arms from caches for distribution.

c. These forces are capable of harassing actions against VNA outposts, ambushing and mining of roads and waterways, sabotage, and acts of terrorism. Their concentration areas are so situated that they could disrupt north-south traffic throughout Central Vietnam by guerrilla action. They are incapable of seizing control of South Vietnam,

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and would require reinforcements in men and supplies from the North for sustained guerrilla operations. Some recent reports have indicated, however, that some supplies already are being moved south by sea, including equipment and materials for local manufacture of explosives and ammunition.

2. What progress, if any, has the Viet Minh made in South Vietnam toward infiltrating and subverting the Government, the military and security forces, the non-Communist political groups, and the sects?

a. There is little evidence on the extent of Viet Minh penetration into the military and security forces. Viet Minh directives indicate that this is a major objective, however, and it is not clear whether the lack of information on the subject results from the efficiency, or the absence of, machinery to detect and control such penetration. Many "former" Viet Minh personnel who have "rallied" to the Diem Government have been assigned to key positions in which they could cause considerable disruption if they chose. Moreover, many Communist "sleepers" may have penetrated to intermediate echelons of the Army and security forces.

b. The Communists have made a major effort to subvert the Army and security forces through agitation and propaganda. These activities have met with only limited success in the Army as a whole, but apparently have been more effective against integrated elements of the religious sects. The reliability of the latter already was questionable, and their dissatisfaction with conditions following their integration was readily exploitable by the Communists.

c. The Viet Minh apparently made a major effort to infiltrate the dissident elements of the religious sects after mid-1955, but with generally unfavorable results. General Soai's surrender in February was a serious blow to their efforts to gain control of the non-Communist rebel forces. The Viet Minh apparently experienced some difficulties in convincing the sect leaders that an alliance with the Viet Minh would be profitable; however, their penetration at lower echelons of the

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dissident groups may permit the continuance, at least temporarily, of small-scale "sect" dissidence.

3. What are present Viet Minh courses of action in South Vietnam? What preparations, if any, are in progress for other possible types of action?

Present Viet Minh courses of action in South Vietnam follow generally a pattern of systematic subversion. This includes:

- a. Penetration of Government administrative and security components;
- b. Development of front organizations sympathetic to or controlled by the "Fatherland Front";
- c. Infiltration into and support for non-Communist rebel groups;
- d. Widespread agitation-propaganda activity in the villages, giving particular attention to ethnic minority groups;
- e. Limited economic warfare measures aimed primarily at obstructing the free movement of rice to markets;
- f. Maintenance of their clandestine paramilitary organization, including command channels, bases, arms caches, and troop units;
- g. Efforts to support the creation of a "government-in-exile" which would be ostensibly non-Communist and in a position to take control of South Vietnam should conditions permit.

These actions are all aimed at weakening and preventing the Diem Government from consolidating its position in South Vietnam.
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There have/several reports indicating that the Viet Minh may be preparing to adopt a more aggressive course of action in the South. These reports allege that the Viet Minh paramilitary elements in the south have been ordered to create new units, distribute cached weapons, and prepare for guerrilla warfare. If these reports are true, they may merely allude to Viet Minh efforts to reinforce the rebel groups of the Hoa Hoa and Cao Dai sects. On the other hand, they could indicate that the Viet Minh are unsatisfied with the progress made thus far through "peaceful" means, and that they believe the initiation of guerrilla warfare will facilitate the accomplishment of their objectives.

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C. What changes, if any, are likely in North Vietnam through mid-1957 with respect to:

1. Political Developments -- No Contribution
2. Economic Developments -- No Contribution
3. Military Strengths and Capabilities

No significant change in the size of the Viet Minh

Regular Army appears likely through mid-1957. Its combat effectiveness probably will continue to improve, however, as the result of continued reorganization and training. It will probably retain its current capabilities relative to South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Although the total number of troops in the Regional and Popular forces probably will not be altered significantly, these components may undergo extensive reorganization in order to improve their effectiveness in an internal security role.

4. The international position and foreign relations of the DRV

No contribution

5. Political, subversive, and military capabilities in South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia?

Viet Minh subversive and military capabilities in South Vietnam are likely to decline during the period of this estimate. This decline will result primarily from the gradually increasing effectiveness of South Vietnam's military and security forces. The loss of psychological momentum arising from a lack of positive action also will contribute to this situation. The Viet Minh could offset this reduced capability to a large extent by infiltrating additional clandestine elements into the South. Short of an all-out invasion, however, Viet Minh military capabilities in the South are unlikely to increase.

In Laos, the Viet Minh capability for subversion will increase if a settlement is reached between the Royal Government and the Pathet Lao. At the very least, the Pathet Lao would retain de facto control of the two northern provinces. If the Pathet Lao military forces were integrated even in part into the Lao National Army, the latter would

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become extremely vulnerable to eventual subversion.

In Cambodia, Viet Minh capabilities for subversion probably will increase somewhat, as Viet Minh clandestine elements attempt to exploit Cambodia's neutralist policy. Communist strength in Cambodia will still be relatively weak, however, as compared to Laos and South Vietnam.

II. THE NON-COMMUNIST POSITION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

A. No Contribution

B. Security

1. What are the strengths and capabilities of the various components of the military and security forces?

The Vietnamese National Army (VNA) is estimated to total about 142,000 troops, including 9,000 integrated sect forces. The VNA is organized into 4 field infantry divisions (strength 8,500), 6 light infantry divisions (strength 5,225), 1 airborne groupment (strength 4,000), 13 territorial regiments, 5 separate sect regiments, and 15 assorted combat battalions. Some progress has been made during the past year in implementing the radical reorganization program, and some training of individuals and model units has been completed. The components of the major units generally are dispersed, however, and many of them have been engaged in continual operations, with the result that unit training has not progressed according to original schedules. At least six months of uninterrupted training will be necessary before the VNA reaches even minimal operational effectiveness at divisional level. The principal defects of the VNA are: (1) lack of an effective chain of command; (2) lack of commensurate quality and experience of command and staff personnel at all echelons; (3) lack of cohesion within major units; and (4) an inadequate logistical and technical support system.

There are two additional security forces in South Vietnam, one in being and one just being organized. The Garde Civile (Civil Guard) is in being with an approximate strength of 48,000. Formed through a merger of former provincial guard, local militia and suppletif elements,

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the Civil Guard has the mission of providing local security at the provincial level in areas that have already been pacified by Army units. Civil Guard units are organized into lightly armed, mobile companies, with command centered at province level. The Civil Guard eventually will provide a national police organization with the responsibility for maintaining law and order, collecting intelligence, and conducting counter-subversive operations throughout South Vietnam except in cities where municipal police departments are authorized. The Civil Guard is, however, still in the throes of organization, and will need considerable refinement and training before it can fully assume its duties. The Civil Guard at present is considered to be relatively effective in Cochinchina, except in unpacified areas, and to be relatively ineffective in Central Vietnam.

The Self-Defense Corps (Dan Ve Doan) is a newly authorized organization which will provide internal security at the village level. The Self-Defense Corps when fully activated will number about 60,000. Its mission is to provide a fixed organization in each village to protect the people therein from indoctrination and intimidation by the Viet Minh and other dissident groups, to give needed assistance to villagers, and to organize anti-Communist activities among the population. The organization of the Self-Defense Corps has not progressed sufficiently to permit an assessment of its probable effectiveness.

The military and security forces of Vietnam currently are considered capable of maintaining internal security against bandit or dissident elements, excluding organized, concerted guerrilla warfare undertaken by Viet Minh cadres. The forces have the capability of maintaining the Government in power against any potential armed opposition now located south of the 17th parallel. This capability does not, however, render unlikely minor, isolated actions by certain bandit or dissident groups. In the event of full-scale guerrilla warfare, relatively large areas of rural Vietnam probably would be lost to Government control.

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In the event of full-scale Viet Minh invasion, the Vietnamese forces at present would be incapable of effective delaying action without early external reinforcement. Weaknesses in organization, training, and command vary within the Army, but in general most units currently would be incapable of effective resistance to Viet Minh invasion. The VNA probably could not delay a Viet Minh advance beyond the line Ban Me Thuot - Nha Trang for more than 60 days.

2. What is the internal security situation in South Vietnam?

What is the extent and nature of the threat posed at present by the sects and by the Viet Minh? By what measures and programs and how effectively is the government dealing with the security threat posed by the sects and by the Viet Minh within South Vietnam? What is the situation with respect to cooperation between government security organizations and the villagers? Has belief in the survival of a non-Communist state strengthened in the past year? Is the general populace willing to support openly the present government in the face of Communist pressures and propaganda? What factors are important in this situation?

The threat posed by the sects is currently much less than at any other time since the inception of the ceasefire. It appears, moreover, that the basis for further dissidence by sect forces, singly or in combination, has been reduced to a minimum. None of the important dissident leaders of a year ago are any longer in active control of their previous forces; they have, variously, fled the country, rallied to the government, accepted integration and dispersal of their forces, have been killed or captured, or have lost control of their forces through the disaffection of the forces themselves. The principal dissident forces remaining are the 1,800 troops led by Ba Cut prior to his capture in April 1958, and 3,500 Cao Dai dissidents led by Lt Col Manh. The intentions and aspirations of these two groups is not clear; the essential fact is that the political and military climate in Vietnam is no longer favorable to dissidence. The political and military strength of the Government has improved to the point that the remaining dissident remnants

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are in no position to make demands or extract concessions. A dissident grouping of any size is now almost certain to become the object of a Government military operation, which, however ineptly executed, will eventually bring intolerable pressures to bear on the dissidents, and force them to relocate, disperse, disband, or otherwise frustrate any conceivable advantage of being in dissidence. Essentially, the sects alone no longer pose a threat to the Government. However, relatively large bandit groups, composed of sects or other elements outside the law, will probably be part of the Vietnam security picture for the foreseeable future.

The extent and nature of the threat posed by the Viet Minh in South Vietnam is described in I. B. 1., 2. Militarily, the Viet Minh can be expected to attempt to utilize and gain control of any dissident organization in being. Incentives offered would include material assistance, and military advisors and cadres. Anti-Government activities effected by utilizing an ostensibly non-Communist organization are particularly desirable from the Viet Minh standpoint, because of their apparent desire to maintain surface adherence to the terms of the Geneva Agreement. However, as previously stated, there has been a progressive decrease in dissident activity, and, in consequence, the opportunities for utilizing dissident factions have been similarly reduced. During the latter half of 1955 the Viet Minh apparently made a considerable effort to utilize the Ba Cut rebel force. This effort resulted in some improvement in rebel tactics and techniques, but did not materially alter Ba Cut's fading stature. The attempt at collusion with Ba Cut appears, on balance, to have been a failure.

The paramilitary capability of Viet Minh forces only remains untested and hence uncertain. The various Vietnamese intelligence agencies continue to devote considerable effort to refining and detailing Viet Minh strengths and dispositions, and it appears that the Vietnamese themselves are confident that they can cope with the estimated

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5,000-10,000 Viet Minh in South Vietnam, even in the event of an increase in the present low level of Viet Minh activity.

A large portion of the Army has either a primary or dual mission of providing internal security. In addition to the 6 light infantry divisions, which have the dual role of meeting external aggression and providing internal security, the 13 territorial regiments are primarily concerned with internal security. Their employment permits the disposition of at least one battalion in each province, which is able to support the more mobile Civil Guard elements also operating at the province level. The Civil Guard in turn supports the Self-Defense Corps, operating at the village level. Although not yet fully implemented, this concept of military protection at every level is well regarded by authoritative United States officials, and is considered an essential parallel to other non-military programs at levels below the province, such as the five-families system, Civic Action, refugee resettlement, and general pro-Government political activity.

In terms of effectiveness, the above measures, when fully implemented, should prove adequate to meet the security threat and to assure the Government's remaining in power. At full effectiveness, however, these measures will not eliminate Viet Minh-style Communism as a significant feature of Vietnamese political thought, nor will they lead to the detection or conversion of the majority of die-hard Viet Minh. The measures are designed to gain the support of an apathetic, fearful rural populace which is still uncertain of the viability of its Government. A large share of Vietnam's security problems will be automatically resolved if even mild support for the Government is forthcoming from the rural areas.

Active military operations against the Viet Minh are only a minor phase of the Government program. These operations are generally in the form of patrols and reconnaissance in force, in areas reported to contain Viet Minh. Actual combat is rare and on a small scale. Such

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activity, however, causes the Viet Minh to remain in remote, inaccessible areas, and discourages the assembly of any significant number of troops. In this limited sense, Government measures of this type can be considered effective.

3. To what extent are military leaders involved in political affairs? To what extent is the military loyal to Diem? In what manner does the military contribute to political stability? To instability? What is the status of integrated sect military leaders and troops?

Diem is fully accepted as a nationalist leader by the Army. During the past year, officers with overly pro-French attitudes, or other attitudes unsympathetic to Diem, generally either have been removed from command, or have given satisfactory evidence of conformity to the new regime. The pace of political activity within the Army and the paramilitary forces by pro-Diem political organizations, particularly the National Revolutionary Movement, has increased considerably during the past year. Reports concerning the extent of this activity are conflicting; however, it has been sufficiently extensive to arouse adverse comment by top Vietnamese leaders who are opposed in principle to such activity. These leaders, although loyal to Diem, believe the Army should remain aloof from "politicizing", and concentrate primarily on the problems of organizing, training and improving the effectiveness of the Army.

The Army's loyalty to Diem's policies in general is assured. Many of the more professionally inclined senior officers would prefer to concentrate on developing the Army's effectiveness rather than employ their relatively untrained tactical units in security operations. There is also some dissatisfaction with the political favoritism frequently evidenced in the selection of officers for promotion and command. The Army leadership in general recognizes the need for the development of a strong, centralized regime, and is in accord with the basic policies of Diem's Government.

The military leadership, primarily through choice, is not a predominant factor in domestic politics. In general, it accepts its role as an instrument of Government policies, thus contributing to political stability in the country.

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The integrated sect leaders in general seem to have been given no responsible positions, and to have lost control of their former units. General Phuong apparently has no specific assignment, and has little influence in Army affairs. Although Colonel Cao makes frequent inspection trips with the top military leaders, he appears to exercise little authority. The integrated sect regiments generally have been deployed to widely separated areas after their re-training is completed. There are indications that the Army is gradually breaking up these regiments by transferring entire battalions to other units, and replacing them with non-sect battalions; thus the sect units eventually will lose their separate identity. The integrated sect forces pose no serious threat to the cohesiveness of the Army, nor to internal stability in general.

C. The Economic Situation -- No Contribution

D. External Relations

1. No Contribution

2. What is the status of South Vietnam's relations with France? What is the extent and nature of French influence, responsibility and commitments in South Vietnam?

The French and Vietnamese are still engaged in military talks which will determine the extent of French military influence, responsibility and commitments in South Vietnam. The withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps is virtually completed, with only 2,500 Army personnel, including the equivalent of one combat battalion, remaining in Vietnam by 1 May. By 1 July, all but 60 men will have been withdrawn. Five Army officers are tentatively scheduled to remain for at least one year in the French Military Mission to Vietnam. The status of the 1,000-man French military support group for the International Control Commission has not yet been agreed on. The headquarters of the French Armed Forces, Far East, was inactivated on 23 April, and all previous French-Vietnamese military agreements are considered by both parties to be null and void.

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III. SOUTH VIETNAM THROUGH MID-1957

A. What are the prospects for the development of increased political stability in South Vietnam?

1. No contribution.
2. What situation would be created if Diem, for whatever reason, were removed from power? Who might succeed him? What policies might be followed?

If Diem were removed from power, the reaction of the Army would depend on the course of events. There are elements within the Army who would follow the lead of the National Revolutionary Movement (NRM), and these may be strong enough to bring almost all of the Army with them. Certain elements, however, might attempt to seize control of the Government, with or without the backing of the NRM, thus tending to create a potentially unstable situation. In any event, the Army will play a major, and possibly decisive role in the struggle for succession.

3. To what extent will the military leaders become involved in political affairs?

The Army High Command will attempt to continue its policy of keeping the Army out of domestic politics. Its efforts in this respect will run counter, however, to those of zealous intermediate and lower echelon officers who see an opportunity for potential self-aggrandizement by engaging in political activities on behalf of the NRM and other parties. It is unlikely, however, that the Army will play a major role in domestic politics during the period of this estimate, except in the event that Diem were removed from power. (See para II, A, 2) The Army leadership will still be preoccupied with the problems of organizing, training, and improving the effectiveness of the Army. It is unlikely that any significant opposition to the regime will emerge within the Army.

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4. How will the Government deal with its major problems? In particular how effective will it be in dealing with the refugees, agrarian reform, the sects, the Viet Minh, and in extending its authority throughout the country?

The Government probably will continue to make gradual progress toward eliminating the dissident sect elements through a combination of military pressure and political negotiations. During the period of this estimate, the sect problem will be virtually eliminated, and former dissident areas probably will be pacified.

The Government probably will be able gradually to restrict the Viet Minh para-military threat to a few remote areas. These areas probably will be sealed off, but it is unlikely that the Government forces will be able to completely pacify them during the period of this estimate. The security of lines of communication will be maintained, and even improved in some areas. In general, if the development of internal security forces (Garde Civile and Self-Defense Corps) is effectively pushed, stability and security should be restored to most areas of Vietnam, with the exception of pockets in the Ca Mau Peninsula, the Plaine des Jones, and in Thu Dan Mot, Phan Thiet, Binh Dinh and Quang Ngai Provinces.

- B. What are the prospects for increased effectiveness of the South Vietnamese military and security forces? That they can largely eliminate the sect military forces? That they can seriously disrupt if not destroy the Viet Minh organization in South Vietnam? Effectiveness against aggression?

The effectiveness of the VNA should improve markedly during the period of this estimate. With the anticipated early elimination of the dissident sect forces, and in the absence of an outbreak of widespread Viet Minh guerrilla activity, most VNA units should be able to return to their normal areas and complete their unit training. In addition, current programs for individual staff, command, and leadership

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training should begin to show results. If the Army leaders are given sufficient authority, current laxities in the fields of command and corruption should be considerably reduced during the period. By the end of the period, the Army should attain a limited degree of operational effectiveness through division level.

The security forces similarly will show a marked improvement. The organization of Garde Civile units should be completed, and they will have gained considerable experience in field operations. The Village Self-Defense Corps program, if aggressively implemented, will add measurably to the maintenance of security in pacified areas.

The military and security forces probably will be able virtually to eliminate the dissident sect forces. Militarily, they probably will be able to contain the Viet Minh para-military forces in remote areas. They probably will make considerable progress in detecting and countering Viet Minh subversive elements, but it is unlikely that they will be able to destroy the Viet Minh organization in South Vietnam.

The Army's effectiveness against external aggression will improve somewhat in that its capability for delaying a Viet Minh invasion will be increased possibly to 90 days on the Nha Trang - Ban Me Thuot line. Without external reinforcement, however, the VNA will not be capable of repelling a Viet Minh invasion.

C. What are the prospects for economic development?

No contribution.

D. What will be the international reactions if no action is taken with respect to holding over-all elections in Vietnam?

Unless over-all Bloc policies are modified, the Communist reaction will be confined to diplomatic, psychological, subversive and economic efforts aimed at discrediting and weakening the Diem Government, and at isolating Diem and the United States Government from other Western Governments and from SEATO.

E. What courses of action are the Viet Minh likely to follow in

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their effort to gain control of South Vietnam? What successes are they likely to achieve? In what manner will their actions in South Vietnam affect and be affected by the situation within North Vietnam and actions with respect to Laos and Cambodia?

The Viet Minh are likely to continue their present courses of action in South Vietnam. They will not resort to an overt invasion unless over-all Bloc policies are modified; the Viet Minh almost certainly lack sufficient stocks of ammunition to support a sustained, full-scale invasion of South Vietnam. The Viet Minh might consider the adoption of guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam; however, a realistic appraisal of their capabilities, of the prospects for obtaining popular support, and of the possible international repercussions to such action would probably lead them to conclude that the chances for success were marginal. The initiation of widespread guerrilla warfare would be likely only as a desperation move to prevent the piecemeal neutralization or destruction of their clandestine para-military organization, or as a prelude to a full-scale invasion of the South by regular forces. If the Viet Minh should resort to guerrilla warfare, they almost certainly would seek to infiltrate reinforcements from North Vietnam both over land and by sea.

The Viet Minh are unlikely to achieve any significant success by their current tactics during the period of this estimate. The improving capabilities and effectiveness of the military and security forces probably will enable the Vietnamese Government to detect and check the spread of Viet Minh subversion. South Vietnam's vulnerability to economic warfare, infiltration, and guerrilla activity will be markedly reduced by the end of the period.

If the Viet Minh initiate guerrilla warfare, they may have some initial success in blocking lines of communication, and they will be able to deny Government control over certain rural and mountainous areas. The combined efforts of the Government's military and security forces, however, probably will be adequate to maintain control over all urban centers, key lines of communication, and much of the countryside.

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Viet Minh actions in South Vietnam will be restricted by economic conditions in North Vietnam. No major Viet Minh military effort against South Vietnam is likely at least prior to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the road and railroad lines of communication between Hanoi and the demarcation line.

F. What will be the likely trends of French political, military, and economic influence in South Vietnam?

Direct French military influence in South Vietnam will be virtually eliminated by mid-1957. Some residual influence resulting from the long period of Vietnamese military orientation toward France, and from the impact of French culture and training of Vietnamese military leaders will remain. The completed withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps and the dissolution of the French High Command have finalized the independence of the Vietnamese forces, and the French no longer will play a significant role in the future plans, policies or programs of the VNA.

IV. POST-MORTEM

1. What major intelligence deficiencies exist in our coverage of Vietnam?

a. Military intelligence coverage of North Vietnam has deteriorated markedly during the past year; this deterioration began with the withdrawal of French military forces from North Vietnam in May 1955, was exacerbated by the breakdown in French-United States relations arising from the unequivocal United States support of Premier Diem, and has reached its apogee with the dissolution of the French Military Command. Reliable and timely Order of Battle information on the Viet Minh forces is almost totally lacking. Information on training and logistic activities is scant. Our knowledge of the dispositions and combat effectiveness of the Viet Minh forces is thus poor and it is questionable whether we would obtain ample early warning of Viet Minh preparations for hostilities.

b. Coverage of Viet Minh para-military forces in South Vietnam also is unsatisfactory. The quality of the information available is poor to the extent that our possible margin of error on the strength

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of these forces exceeds 50 percent, plus or minus.

c. We lack detailed information on the scope, tactics, logistical aspects, and effectiveness of Vietnamese Army operations against the dissident sect forces. Our estimate of the effectiveness of the Vietnamese Army is therefore subject to considerable error.

d. We also lack detailed information on the development of the security forces in South Vietnam. Considerable planning data are available, but the actual progress in organizing, activating, training and employing these forces is insufficiently known.

2. What recommendations have you for meeting them?

a. The first deficiency noted above is potentially the most serious and results from the lack of an existing capability by any party for obtaining the required information. The potentially most effective sources of this information are the Vietnamese intelligence agencies. Efforts at training and guiding these agencies must be intensified if the deficiency is to be overcome. The only direct means of meeting this deficiency available to the United States which has not been exploited is photographic reconnaissance. Since most population centers, communications lines, and military units are located in the vicinity of the coast, North Vietnam is peculiarly vulnerable to this means of acquiring information. Consideration should be given to exploiting this vulnerability as a means of confirming troop dispositions and detecting troop movements, logistical activity, and potential preparations for hostilities.

b. The most suitable means for overcoming the second deficiency is to improve the capabilities and effectiveness of the Vietnamese intelligence agencies. Improved field coordination between United States agencies would also assist in this request.

c. The third deficiency can be overcome only through improved relations between United States and Vietnamese officials. The Vietnamese have been extremely reluctant to divulge details of their operations against the dissident sect forces for security reasons. Those

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United States advisory personnel who are with Vietnamese units or who have access to information regarding these operations apparently respect the Vietnamese desire for security. Efforts should be made to gain the confidence of the Vietnamese so that the information will be made available.

d. The fourth deficiency apparently rises from a failure on the part of field collectors to report on the subject. All agencies concerned should assure that their field representatives are aware of these deficiencies and that they forward available information.

V. VALIDITY STUDY

Briefly, what is your assessment of the validity of the major conclusions of NIE 63.1-55 and NIE 63.1-3-55?

The conclusions of NIE 63.1-55 have proved to be quite valid. No significant developments have occurred which were not covered by the conclusions and the assessment of DRV problems and probable courses of action generally could be projected through mid-1957.

63.1-3-55
The conclusions of NIE ~~63.1-55~~ have proved essentially valid. The extent of Diem's political solidarity, and the declining importance of the sect problem were perhaps not adequately indicated in the conclusion section. However, no significant developments have occurred in the seven months since publication which were not covered in the estimate.

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